

U.S. Department of Labor

Mine Safety and Health Administration
1100 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22209-3939



December 8, 2006

Dear Mine Operators and Stakeholders:

As you may know, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) published the Agency's final rule on Emergency Mine Evacuation today, December 8, 2006. This final rule replaces the Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) that the agency published in March of this year.

The final rule retains the immediate accident notification provision in the ETS and requires mine operators to notify MSHA of all immediately reportable accidents within 15 minutes of the occurrence. However, the final rule significantly changes how a mine operator must notify MSHA.

Beginning today, the effective date of the final rule, mine operators must call the MSHA toll-free number at (800) 746-1553 to notify MSHA of an immediately reportable accident. This protocol is a significant change from the ETS which required that a mine operator contact the appropriate MSHA District Office first. This one toll-free phone call is the only call that mine operators will need to make to notify MSHA.

More importantly, in order to meet our responsibility to mine operators, miners and the public more effectively, MSHA transitioned to a new centralized call answering system today, December 8, 2006. All calls will be answered by a live person, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Callers will be greeted by a skilled customer service representative who will record the call, including the time and date of the call, enter the information in a data system, and contact the MSHA District Office personnel on duty.

Every second counts during an emergency, and any delay in responding can mean the difference between life and death for an injured or trapped miner. That's why this new requirement is so important. Immediate notification will lead to the mobilization of an effective mine emergency response, which can be critical in saving lives, stabilizing the situation, and preserving the accident scene. The new call system provides an improved, streamlined approach for tracking and processing immediately reportable accidents to help us achieve those goals.

If you have any questions about the immediate notification requirement, any other part of the new emergency evacuation final rule, or the call center answering service, please contact your District Office or visit our web site at www.msha.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard E. Stickler".

Richard E. Stickler
Assistant Secretary for
Mine Safety and Health